



North Philly's TJ Atoms acted his way into Wu-Tang Clan

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Why did new buildings flood?



The Riverwalk development opened on the Schuylkill River in Logan Square this year. It flooded in Ida's aftermath. —WHYY PHOTO/RYAN BRIGGS



The roof of a shed rests on a railing along the Schuylkill River Trail north of Walnut Street. —EMMA LEE/WHYY

Restoring Schuylkill trail could take months

Ximena Conde
WHYY

The floodwaters that seeped onto Philadelphia's Schuylkill River Trail from the remnants of Hurricane Ida have receded, and volunteers have helped clear out mud to make the trail walkable. Still, it will be months until the trail looks the way it did before.

According to the Schuylkill River Development Corporation, the severe storm Sept. 1 knocked out lighting along the trail; about 300 feet of fencing that separates people from the railroad tracks was damaged; a dock washed down the river; and the public restroom needs to be pumped after flooding.

"That's going to be a big cost to repair and probably will happen over a period of months," said Joe Syrnick, president and CEO of the SRDC.

The trail was still closed last week from Lock Street to Shawmont Avenue because of dangerous conditions, and the city asked residents to continue to avoid recreational boating and kayaking on the river.

A spokesperson for Parks and Rec said the city was assessing damage with federal, state, and local partners. The department was also relying on the public to report damage online.

Based on the total damage, the city can make a FEMA request for public assistance,

TRAIL » 4A

Outdated FEMA maps, local codes worsened deluge in Philly

Meir Rinde
WHYY

A lake of muddy brown stormwater filled the intersection of North 23rd and Arch streets earlier this month, swamping the corner's glass-walled Giant supermarket and the gleaming new Riverwalk apartment tower above.

Marooned tenants occasionally emerged onto the entrance patio and stood gazing across the rippling murk. A resident who had been ferried across the pond by a Coast Guard boat paced the muddy upslope of 23rd Street, complaining bitterly about the building management. Their inadequate preparation for the remnants of Hurricane Ida the previous night was the latest in a series of missteps since he moved in a few months ago, he said.

"They said the construction would be done by this date. The construction is still not done today," said the man, who declined to give his name for fear of retaliation from his landlord. "So the flooding was definitely not even mentioned. A lot of people are very, very upset."

"The building is not prepared for anything, let alone a disaster like this," he said.

Those stuck inside had not heard anything from the building manager until 2:36 p.m., when an email announced the company was in the process of getting a boat, he said. "We will be picking up beer and snacks and hosting a 'flood' party that will be set up in the lounge area," the message read. Executives at the management company, PMC Property Group, did not respond to messages seeking comment.

Having watercraft at the ready in case of flash floods may be a lot to expect from a landlord. But the need for boat rescues at the Riverwalk building, in Manayunk, and at other sites along the Schuylkill River last week illustrates both the unusual severity of last week's floods and the challenge of designing and operating buildings that can withstand the region's increasingly intense and frequent storms.

In recent years, city officials have stepped up their efforts to educate developers and architects about floodproofing requirements for construction in floodplains along the Schuylkill and other parts of Philadelphia,

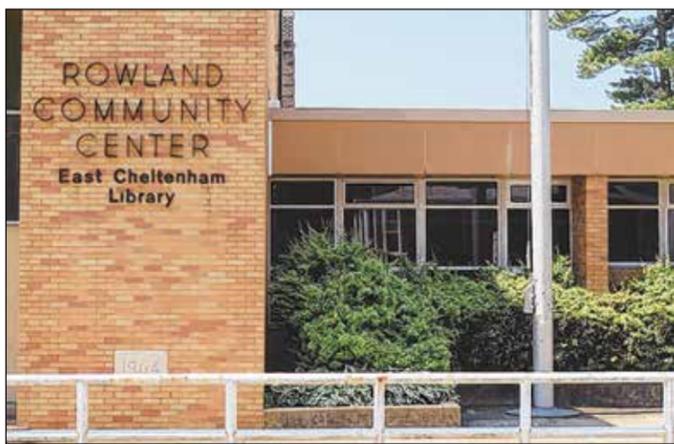
and to ensure building plans comply with regulations.

But the FEMA flood maps that determine where homes can be built and how high they must be elevated are badly out-of-date. Developers rarely volunteer to alter their plans to incorporate newer data or the effects of climate change, which has already raised sea levels in the region and heightened flooding risk, said Joshua Lippert, the city's floodplain manager.

"Floodplain maps by FEMA are dated the day they become effective. The 2007 map for the Schuylkill River is actually data from the late 1990s, so it's extremely dated. There is a lot more risk that is potentially greater than shown on some of those products," Lippert said.

"Developers want to meet the minimum requirements. They might have intentions to do more, but ultimately the city is only holding them accountable to the minimum requirements. The way the program is developed today does not incentivize higher standards or more resilient practices," he said.

BUILDINGS » 4A



East Cheltenham Library. —CHELTENHAM TOWNSHIP LIBRARY SYSTEM

Two Cheltenham libraries will be closed for months

Costly repairs needed; township considers consolidating all sites

Kenny Cooper
WHYY

Two of the Cheltenham Township Library System's four locations — East Cheltenham and La Mott — will be closing beginning Oct. 18. The township has been unable to fix the decertified boilers in the buildings that house the libraries, both of which double as recreation centers, due to financial constraints.

While the closures are expected to last through the winter months, the township is considering plans to consolidate all the locations in the future, library system interim director Mary Kay Moran said Friday. As far as she knows, there are no cur-

rent plans to close the two buildings permanently, she said.

The libraries will continue outreach in the communities they will soon be leaving, she said, and the staff will be reassigned to the other two locations.

"The township manager has given me his assurance that if we can find an area where we might set up a temporary location, he'll reach out to property owners in the area and see if we can get a low-rent or no-rent situation, so that we can still be near those neighborhoods," Moran said.

The four libraries serving the township, which has a population of more than 37,000, started out as separate institutions in the neighborhoods of Glenside, Elkins Park, East Cheltenham, and La Mott. They were combined several decades ago under the nonprofit library system

LIBRARIES » 4A

Despite ruling, Cosby's accuser says she feels like 'symbol of hope'

Graham Bowley

The call came just before noon.

Andrea Constand had returned to her downtown Toronto apartment after walking her dog Maddy in a nearby park, when the Montgomery County district attorney's office rang. Stand by, she was told, a ruling on Bill Cosby's appeal could be handed down soon by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

By this day, June 30, Constand, the woman whose account of sexual assault had led to the conviction of the man once known as America's Dad was finding ways to move past the trauma that the trial had brought to her daily life. She had sold her apartment, was moving to the countryside north of the city and preparing to publish a memoir, "The Moment," to detail her singular experience with Cosby and the criminal justice system.

Though more than 50 women had accused Cosby of sexual misconduct, including assault, prosecutors had — for a variety of reasons — only successfully brought criminal charges in her case. And now Cosby was in prison far away, serving a three- to 10-year sentence in Pennsylvania after having been found guilty of three counts of aggravated indecent assault.

He had already lost an appeal. The dust once kicked up by the trial, by the verdict, by the media attention, by the focus on her case as a breakthrough "moment" for the #MeToo era, had largely settled. About an hour later, the phone rang again.

"Andrea," said Kate Delano, the



Andrea Constand at her home north of Toronto, Sept. 2, 2021. As she releases her memoir, Constand details her reactions to the court decision that overturned Bill Cosby's conviction on sexual assault charges. —ANGELA LEWIS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

district attorney's director of communications, "the Supreme Court has vacated his conviction."

It is perhaps an understatement to say that for Constand, and many others, the decision came as a shock. Cosby would not only be freed: The court also ruled he could not be tried again. Constand said she found it deeply unsettling that Cosby, still a man of means and influence, was out of prison, unconstrained and able to contact her and others.

"I had a lump in my throat," Constand, 48, said in a rare in-depth interview last month in her new home north of Toronto. "I really felt they were setting a predator loose and that made me sick."

Constand's reaction to the court decision and her long experience with the case are detailed in the

memoir, which is to be released Tuesday.

Within minutes of the second call, Constand drove off, heading with her 22-year-old niece to her sister's home outside Toronto, a trip that had been planned before the afternoon became untethered by the ruling. From the car, she spoke by phone with the two former prosecutors who had helped lead the case against Cosby, Stewart Ryan and Kristen Gibbons Feden. They explained that Cosby would no longer be officially designated as a sexually violent predator, a status that requires lifetime public registration and community notification — something that had afforded Constand special comfort.

CONSTAND » 4A